

[Mrs. Francis Delvitt]

Duplicate

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM [B?] Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Irving Nicholson

ADDRESS 4507-15th Ave. Brooklyn, N. Y.

DATE 11-4-[39?]

SUBJECT TALES OF THE WEST INDIES: MRS. FRANCIS DELVITT

1. Ancestry Mother and Father born in the West Indies, but came here at early ages. Lived most of their lives in restricted area of the East Side.

2. Place and date of birth

Born 1897 in West Indies (St. Croix)

3. Family

Three sons, one daughter

4. Places lived in, with dates

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Came to New York from St. Croix in 1927

5. Education, with dates

Finished highest grade school in St. Croix

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates

7. Special skills and interests

8. Community and religious activities

9. Description of informant

The woman, is of a dark brown skin; there is a broad forehead, and a few streaks of grey run through the hair which is long and brushed back.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Irving Nicholson

ADDRESS 4507-15th Ave. Brooklyn, N. Y.

DATE 11-3-38

SUBJECT TALES OF THE WEST INDIES: MRS. FRANCIS DELVITT

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1. Date and time of interview 11-3-38 at 12:05 PM

2. Place of interview 314 Madison Street, NYC. in the apartment of the person, top floor front right.

3. Name and address of informant

Mrs. Francis Delvitt 314 Madison St., N. Y. C. top floor front

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

Miss Knepper, Director of the Negro Activities Henry Street Settlement, 263 Henry St. N. Y. C.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

The house is one of the worst on the East Side, rundown, with long dark halls, water and garbage on the floor. The apartment is bundled together with a great deal of bric a brack and little room. In a tiny parlor a family portrait hangs over a piano. There are 4 children in the family and the negro woman complains about the quarters.

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NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

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NAME OF WORKER Irving Nicholson

ADDRESS 4507-15th Ave. Bklyn, N. Y.

DATE Nov. 3, 1938

SUBJECT TALES OF THE WEST INDIES: MRS. FRANCES DELVITT

In this place, in the West Indies, there was annancy, which means a spider. So in that place the law was when the husband died, the whole family had to be buried with him, husbands, kids, including the household, so that all the troubles of the family should die with the man.

Now this annancy, who was always fightin' the law, be didn't want to be buried with his wife so he got in with the man who blow [roll?] the drum after a funeral from the top of the trees. Under the tree was the grave. So, when the burial ceremony was over, this man who supposed to roll the drum like thunder - ru tu tu tutu, and this man, been aware of what was goin' to happen, and being bein' agreed with the annancy, instead of rollin' he the drum he said;

"Listen, Father God in talkin'. the The Livin' is not to be buried with the dead."

And the people listened. And the man came off the tree. And the annancy gain victory over that law which he break by his trick.

People their there believe that story because they 'flat thinkin', 2 short thinkin'. (Mrs. Delvitt meant that the people were very superstitious and even here in America many think it is best to bury all the family troubles with the dead.)

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Once, [?] a lady married a gentleman that his first wife was dead, leaving a little girl and a boy. So this husband didn't know this new wife was a witch. So, one day, she had a bunch of figs and she was goin' out. So she said to the little girl:

"I'm goin' out, and you see that the bunch of fig. If you see a black bird come in, don't let him pick the pig fig."

Well, she went, and, no sooner had she gone, than the bird came flyin' through the window. The girl look at it and wonder what she could do to prevent it from pickin' the fig. So she begin to sing:

"Do, black bird, do, blackbird, don' pick that fig. For my mother, she will kill me for the sake of that fig."

She kept on singing singin' . But the bird did not listen. He kept on pickin' the fig 'til he had enough and he flew through the window. Then the mother, the witch , return and as she come in, she look and she said to the girl:

"Didn't I tell you not to let the bird pick the fig."

"I tol him not to, but he still pick it."

The mother didn't say nothing nothin' she took up something somethin' and she slew the kid. So in the garden in back of the house was a large pepper tree. She pull up the tree and bury the kid beneath and she plant the popper tree back in the same spot.

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Well, the father return in the evenin' and he ask for the daughter. The witch tol' him that she had sent her to get somethin'. He waited a long time and the little girl didn't come. In the meantime he began to eat his supper. He thought to himself:

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"I could use a fresh piece of pepper"

So he sent the son to the garden to get him that pepper. The son went and as he stretched his hand to pick the pepper a voice sung out:

"Do, brother, do, brother, don't don' pick that pepper. For my mother, she had killed we for the sake of the fig. For my mother, she had bury me under this tree for the sake of a fig."

So the son went into the house and told tol' the father what he had heard. The father wanted to see himself and he went outside to the tree. As he was about to touch it, again the voice cried out:

"Dear papa, dear papa, don't don' pick that pepper, for my mother she had killed me for the sake of a fig."

The father grew angry and slew the mother.

According to the informant: " This story more real because I figure like this. If you have a kid, you have someone take care of it, and if somethin' happens to it, you try to revenge. Nowadays we figure we take it to court but he, the husband , just went ahead and do what he think and that was the end of that. "

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BU-ANNANCY, THE SPIDER

Once upon a time annancy had a friend, an' that was a goat, so his friend came to spend the day with him. The name for each one was bu-goat and bu-annancy. When bu-goat come the annancy say:

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“Bu-goat, you come today an' I haven't got a thing in the house to eat. I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll go for a walk down the road, an' I know where a dumplin' tree is.”

This tree was made of flour, salt and sugar. They imagine that this tree was really down the road. So when they got down, there was the tree an' it appears as they was late comin' to that tree because other people had passed and picked what they wanted. So only three dumplin's was left.

Bu-annancy went up into the tree an' bu-goat stood under it to receive the dumplin's when fallin' to the ground. Bu-goat had eaten two of them when the third was thrown. Bu-goat, he thought all was for him, so he ate up the third dumplin' too. When the annancy climbed down from the tree he asked: “Hey, bu-goat, where in my dumplin'?”

The bu-goat became frightened an' he started to fuss with bu-annancy. He thought that bu-annancy meant to hurt him, so he run an' run to the sea-shore. So he dug a hole in the sand, an' he bury himself. So bu-annancy come runnin' behind him an' he stump his foot on a piece of stump. He didn't know it was the horn of the bu-goat stickin' out of the sand.

Well, he couldn't get it out so he went home with his mind all set to chop that stump out. He bring his hatchet an' his hammer an' his chisel, an' he begin to chop, hammer an' chisel.

He keep workin' until at last the sand flew apart an' he 5 make one big pull on the stump, an' up come the bu-goat. He say to him:

“Bu-goat, I'm goin' to eat you—skin, stomach, dumplin' an' all.”

So he took bu-goat, who was dead from the poundin', an' he put him in the oven, an' he ate him all up—skin, stomach, dumplin' an' all.

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FORM D Extra Comment

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Irving Nicholson

ADDRESS 4507-15th Ave. Bklyn, N. Y.

DATE Nov. 3, 1938

SUBJECT TALES OF THE WEST INDIES: MRS. FRANCES DELVITT

These tales were told to the informant by her mother when she was still a small child. She repeats them just as she heard them, and then goes on to explain their significance. There are many more such tales and the negro women wants me to give her time for recollection. I will, therefore, see her some time next week. The tales are important because they reflect on the ideas and attitudes of the negro people living today in the worst sections of the East Side.

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Mrs. Delvitt was indignant about the housing conditions of the poor negro families. She exploded:

Right now, the way I look into things to the way we poor people house. You can't get a good place to live. Wherever there good housing places too high for you to pay. We are tol' there a lot buildin' goin' on, but that don' go down to the poor class of colored people. When I had to move took me a whole month to get a place to live. Everyplace we tol' don't want colored people here. Why? What is the reason? Everyone ask that. And for

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this particular need, which mean housin', I would ask that a step be made so that colored people of the East Side may be provided with decent place to live. For humanity's sake I'm askin' that.

She continued:

I never serious as I should about politics, but we don' want a Hitler. In the meantime I wouldn't like there to be a war. But what they do to the Czech? Look as it it help at that particular time. But now? I hear more talk of different opinions. Now there more talk. Looks like Hitler still not satisfied.

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